

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

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NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer, Vice Chairman
National Intelligence Council

This from after
his dinner with Jay and me.

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Attachment



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TALKS WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

Mr George Shultz, the American Secretary of State, has now published the full list of his team to conduct arms talks with the Soviet Union. Since his meeting with Mr Gromyko earlier this month many speeches from the administration, including President, Reagan, have tried to impress upon domestic public opinion, European expectations and Soviet policy makers that the process initiated at Geneva on January 7 is not likely to yield early or spectacular results. That attitude has been echoed by Sir Geoffrey Howe.

It is thus surprising to hear Mrs Thatcher, in Bonn, describe 1985 as a "year of decision" in which East-West relations will be on the verge of a great step forward. Such a statement suggests a misunderstanding of the potential pitfalls in a resumption of arms talks. There is a colossal gap between what the Soviet Union and the United States hope to get out of these talks, which Mrs Thatcher seems to be ignoring. Secondly, such an approach only stimulates Western opinion to a desire for a treaty - any treaty - which would pay lip service to the idea that things are better, whereas the only safe and realistic attitude to adopt towards the East-West question is one which recognizes the underlying incompatibility of our two sisters, and the need therefore to be firm and unemotional in our dealings with the East.

No treaty on weapons is going to change or civilize the Soviet system. It is a dangerous fallacy to believe otherwise, and it is not only Mrs Thatcher who can fall into it. Mr Paul Nitze, for instance, one of the American negotiating team, talks of an agreement to "live and let live" with the Soviet Union. He thus forgets that the Soviet system has no such attitude to the West.

With that understanding as our shield, however, useful progress might be made to limit the risk to our security posed by the increasing production of

theless remember that the total megatonnage of the American stock pile is only a quarter the size it was in 1959, while Soviet systems and explosive power have increased progressively all that time.

The Geneva process is doomed if the Soviet side get the impression that either the United States administration or America's allies in Europe are desperate for a new arms treaty at any price. That is certainly not true of President Reagan himself. Mr Shultz's appointments show that the State Department gives greater recognition to the President's tenacity on this point than one would have suspected from the "noises off" in Washington that have been audible since the election.

The Soviet side wants an arms agreement which would involve the Americans discontinuing research into missile defence. Such a desire sits uneasily with the fact that the Soviets have themselves conducted more research into missile defence than have the Americans and have deployed two anti-missile systems in fact, whereas none exists in the United States.

The question which West Europeans should thus ask themselves is not whether or not President Reagan's strategic defence initiative (SDI) works - since they tend to have answered that in the negative already before giving it adequate thought - but why, if it does not work, the Soviet Union is so keen to stop its development?

There are two major attractions about the prospect of successful research into SDI: one military, one moral. The military attraction is that it would enable the West as a whole to move away from a policy of no defence, such as we have at present, towards one in which the balance between offence and defence was more even.

The moral attraction is as compelling. All human instinct suggests that self-defence is a preferable posture to one which

retaliation as a means of deterring a potential adversary. Were that not the case the so-called strategy of "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) maintained by the West would not have suffered from a cumulative lack of support which is evident in Western public opinion.

At this stage of technology it is clear that West Europe and Japan have much to offer the United States in the forthcoming research programme. Research into sensors and communications technology in laser development is widespread in Europe. The Japanese are clearly competitive with the United States over developments in digital processing. The essence of the kind of missile defence which is visualized would be to intercept an incoming missile at its earliest phase, long before its actual direction could be ascertained. Consequently the system, if it worked, would automatically protect America's allies at source. There are indications from Washington, both diplomatically and in the scientific community, that any involvement in the research programme would thus be bound to stimulate a reciprocal move by the United States to enable the allies to share in the turnkey of a system which by virtue of being non-nuclear and solely defensive would enhance their security.

At the end of any argument about its merits, those qualities of the SDI are left unscathed. In this pause between the preliminary Geneva talks and the first arms control sessions later in the year, it would help consolidate the Western position if America's allies came forward and committed themselves to a joint research operation in strategic defence. They would have public opinion behind them and they would make it clear to the Soviet leadership that there was no question of the West forsaking a line of research and a potential change in its defensive philosophy, which the Soviets have themselves never